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LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION



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TO: Legislative Audit Committee Members

FROM: Jim Pellegrini, Deputy Legislative Auditor, Performance Audits *J.P.*

DATE: June 2000

RE: **Follow-up Performance Audit
Disaster and Emergency Services (97P-03)
Department of Military Affairs**

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INTRODUCTION

In January 1998, we presented our performance audit on Disaster and Emergency Services. The audit was completed at the request of the Legislative Audit Committee. Audit scope included a review of the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. We also examined the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Military Affairs, Disaster and Emergency Services Division (DES), other state agencies, and local political subdivisions.

The report made five recommendations to the Department of Military Affairs. We requested and received an implementation status from the department in August 1999. We updated this status by interviewing the DES Administrator in March 2000. This memorandum reflects the implementation status of the five recommendations.

SUMMARY

Four of five recommendations are implemented and the fifth is being implemented. The most important recommendation we made in this audit is Recommendation #5, which reduces area responsibility of DES district representatives by increasing the number of districts from five to six. The department implemented Recommendation #5 within a few months of the issuance of the report. By focusing on decentralization and improving their capability to provide on-site training and technical assistance, the department has positively impacted the other four recommendations. The remaining recommendations address: scheduling and conducting local exercises, development of a state hazard mitigation program, decentralizing earthquake program administration, and DES staff training. We believe the department has met the intent of our audit recommendations and do not recommend further work at this time.

<u>Recommendation Status</u>	
Implemented	4
Being Implemented	1
Total	5

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RECOMMENDATION REVIEW

The following sections address each of the five recommendations.

Prior Recommendation #1

We recommend DES develop criteria for determining the frequency of local exercises. Criteria should consider:

- Need for exercise training.
- Time required to prepare/schedule an exercise.
- Actual events which verify plans.
- Jurisdiction and/or district-wide risks, resources, and capabilities.

This recommendation is implemented.

Through a working group, including county coordinators and district representatives, DES revised exercise frequency criteria and included it in their Program Standards document. More emphasis is placed on joint county exercises to take advantage of local capabilities and involve more officials in the exercise. By adding two district representatives, DES staff can more effectively assist more counties with exercise planning and operations. In addition, the exercise design course taught by DES was revised to focus on risks and resources. An exercise working group is charged with allocating federal training money (with county match) for planning exercises, reducing local costs.

Prior Recommendation #2

We recommend DES examine alternatives for development of a cost-effective mitigation program and seek revision to legislation if warranted.

This recommendation is being implemented.

The department prepared a mitigation legislative proposal for the 1999 Legislative Session. However, it was not approved due to higher priorities. The federal Project Impact provides some relief in this area. In the past two years, three counties received funding for projects under this program. DES established a mitigation working group, responsible for reviewing applications and projects. In addition, compared to the initial audit, more DES staff are working mitigation at least part-time. One DES staff member was selected by the federal agency to help train mitigation officers in other states and is developing the course.

Prior Recommendation #3

We recommend DES review the administration of the earthquake program to decentralize activities and increase staff resource effectiveness.

This recommendation is implemented.

DES decentralized the earthquake manager's position by making the six district representatives more responsible for dissemination and training regarding earthquake preparedness. The former position now supports DES's mitigation program and consolidates information on risk analysis using a software program, in addition to providing earthquake preparedness materials to district representatives.

Prior Recommendation #4

We recommend the division review disaster and emergency services training program alternatives to:

- A. Determine a balance of professional and functional courses.
- B. Designate staff training responsibilities to maximize decentralized training.

This recommendation is implemented.

DES management expects to balance professional and functional training from two activities: (1) input from the DES training working group, composed of both staff and county coordinators; and (2) through the use of an annual training assessment/survey provided to all county coordinators, which allows for county prioritization of needs. District representatives are involved in both processes and are frequently used to conduct decentralized training at county locations. Due to the increase in district representatives, there are more opportunities for one-on-one training/discussion at the county level, and counties are more willing to sponsor training locally.

Prior Recommendation #5

We recommend the division:

- A. Review district boundaries to reduce the area of coverage and increase the number of district representatives.
- B. Define the role of district representatives for the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Role definition should include:
 - Local emergency operations plan update/review.
 - Emergency operations center capabilities.
 - Identification of mitigation projects.
 - Hazards identification and risk analysis.
 - Community training.
 - Resource list development.

This recommendation is implemented.

Position descriptions were rewritten for all six regions, accomplished when the four regions were split, eighteen months ago. As a result of the reduction in the area of responsibility (number of counties), district representatives spend considerably more time as trainers, and as meeting facilitators, within and across district boundaries. District representatives are better able to focus on the specific phases of emergency management most important to their districts/counties: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery to address each of the issues identified in the recommendation.

cc/PERFORMDISASTER/97P-03 DES FUP.docx

cc: Jim Greene, Administrator, Disaster and Emergency Services Division

